Drawn into Controversie

Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism

Edited by
Michael A.G. Haykin and Mark Jones

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht



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Preface

This project began as an idea a few years ago when I (Mark Jones) sat down with my then Ph.D supervisor, Michael Haykin, and discussed with him the idea of a book that looks at the various theological debates that took place between Reformed theologians in the context of British Puritanism. Since that time we sought to find authors with expertise in Puritan theology that would be able to write on the debates covered in this book. We are grateful for their co-operation in making this project a reality.[1] We are also grateful to the staff, especially Jörg Persch and Christoph Spill, at Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht for their help in bringing this book to the press. We are also very thankful to Herman Selderhuis and the RHT series editors for accepting this book into this fine series.

This book does not look at every debate that took place among Puritan theologians, but it does give a fairly comprehensive overview of some of the most significant debates that took place in Britain during the seventeenth century among Reformed theologians who agreed on more points of theology than they disagreed. Richard Muller's chapter shows that this type of project provides a helpful companion to the literature in recent years that has questioned the old historiography put forth in terms of "Calvin against the Calvinists".

While it is customary to offer thanks to those who have helped make a book a reality, I (Michael Haykin) would also like to stress that in doing so, I am not doing this in any sort of perfunctory manner. I am deeply thankful for the help afforded me by my assistant at the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Revd. Steve Weaver. Finally, I would like to thank my dear wife Alison for her patience and ongoing support in all of my academic pursuits, and especially in the editing of this book.

I (Mark Jones) want to thank the members at Faith Vancouver Presbyterian Church for encouraging (enduring?) me in my academic pursuits as their minister. It is also an honor to have edited this book with Michael Haykin, a person and scholar from whom I have learned much. Finally, and most importantly, I thank my wife Barbara for her continued support in all areas of my life.

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[1] The title for this book, "*Drawn into Controversie*" comes from John Crandon's Epistle dedicatory to *Mr. Baxter's Aphorisms Exorized and Anthorized* (London, 1654).

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1. Diversity in the Reformed Tradition: A Historiographical Introduction

Richard A. Muller

1.1 Introduction: Tradition, Diversity, and the Interpretation of Reformed Thought

Traditions are, by their very nature, diverse. Nor do theological traditions provide an exception to this rule, even when, as in the cases of Augustinianism, Thomism, Lutheranism, or Calvinism they have been named for a single individual. The case of Augustinianism is particularly instructive. That there is an Augustinian tradition, few would deny. What "Augustinian" precisely means is, however, subject to considerable variety, if not disagreement. In a general sense, the theology of Western Christendom is Augustinian. If one traces out the medieval theology of grace, Thomas Aquinas stands as an Augustinian. If one examines the issue of philosophical models, Franciscans like Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus are clearly Augustinian. If one examines the emphatically Augustinian theology and spirituality of the Augustinian order, one nonetheless finds both *via antiqua* and *via moderna* Augustinians.[2] A similar point can be made concerning Thomism, which experienced several branches in the later middle ages, a significant shift from an emphasis on the Sentence commentary to the Summa in the early sixteenth-century, and significant development in the debates over Molinism in the seventeenth century. Likewise the Lutheran tradition which, although it does tend to identify Luther as its foundational thinker, early on incorporated Melanchthonian elements, and experienced considerable differences over such issues as the understanding of Christ's real presence in the Lord's Supper, the relationship of faith and works, and the nature of original sin – as evidenced in the debates leading to the Formula of Concord (1580).

Equally so, the Reformed tradition, which did not begin with the generation of thinkers like Calvin, Musculus, and Vermigli, but with an earlier

[2] See David C. Steinmetz, "Luther and the Late Medieval Augustinians: Another Look," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 44 (1973), 245–260.

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generation of Reformers of rather varied training and background – notably Bucer, Zwingli, Capito, and Oecolampadius – is a highly diverse tradition and, in addition, was rather diverse in its origins. Nonetheless, the diversity of the older Reformed tradition was not a prominent subject of discussion in the older literature on "Calvinism." The appearance of diversity in the Reformed tradition as the subject of the present volume identifies a significant line of argument in the on-going work of examining and reassessing the development of seventeenth-century Protestant thought.

Accordingly, readers will find little of the older "Calvin against the Calvinists" model in the following chapters. The theological positions of seventeenth-century authors are no longer evaluated in terms of their resemblance (or lack of resemblance) to Calvin's thought, but as exponents of a diverse and variegated tradition – indeed, a tradition that diversified increasingly in proportion to the increasing number of teachers, preachers, and theologians who came to be numbered in its ranks. The old claim that Calvin was the founder and norm of the Reformed tradition and that something disastrous happened to the Reformed tradition shortly after his death, yielding a predestinarian, scholastic, speculative, metaphysical monolith that could be set over against Calvin's humanistic Christocentrism, has given way to the portrait of a highly complex tradition in process of development. "Calvin against the Calvinists" has not, in other words, been replaced by an equally monotonous refrain of "Calvin for the Calvinists." Calvin's theology is referenced, not as a norm to be invoked for the examination of the later Reformed tradition, but as part of an antecedent complex of earlier Reformed formulations lying in the background of many aspects of the later Reformed positions. Beyond this, later developments in this diverse tradition are allowed to speak for themselves, out of their own historical contexts.

From the perspective of one who has participated in over three decades of the examination and reassessment of the older Reformed theology, the importance of this shift in method and approach ought not to be underestimated – nor, indeed, should the confusion concerning both the nature of the Reformed tradition and the significance of Calvin's theology generated by the "Calvin against the Calvinists" approach. Noting some of the inherent problems in this approach in order, if only to highlight the historiographical advance represented in the essays found here.

At its core, the "Calvin against the Calvinists" historiography was a highly theologized product of the era of neo-orthodoxy. It not only identified Calvin, often specifically the 1559 edition of Calvin's *Institutes*, as providing the sole theological index for the assessment of later Reformed thought, but it identified Calvin as a thoroughly Christocentric thinker whose theology focused on Christology and which for purely dogmatic

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concerns placed the doctrine of predestination in an *a posteriori* position.[2] With these dogmatic shibboleths in hand, it rather easily labeled theologies that placed the doctrine of predestination toward the beginning of the system, often following the doctrine of God, as drastic departures from Calvin's christocentrically "balanced" theology. Theodore Beza was identified as the culprit, and his little *Tabula praedestinationis*, labeled as the source of the predestinarian system – even thought it was written a decade before Calvin's death, in consultation with Calvin, and is neither a theological system nor a prospectus for a theological system.[3] According to the "Calvin against the Calvinists" model, where Calvin was Christocentric, *a posteriori*, inductive, and humanistic, later Calvinists focused on predestination, and argued scholastically in an *a priori*, deductive manner. The understanding of scholasticism on the part of this scholarship was, among other things, unique to the "Calvin against the Calvinists" model and quite out of touch with the main lines of scholarship concerning the nature of scholasticism. Specifically, scholasticism was defined as a highly deterministic form of predestinarianism, immersed in Aristotle, and devoted to a logic of deducing entire theological systems from the divine decree rather than, as the large body of extant scholarship on scholasticism had long indicated, primarily an academic method that was suited to multiple disciplines and that did not determine such results as predestinarian systems.[4]

In what was, arguably, a more dogmatically deductive argument than any launched by a seventeenth-century Calvinist, this older line of scholarship held that a Christocentric Calvin must have held to a notion of universal atonement while the later Calvinist predestinarians must have deduced a doctrine of limited atonement from their view of the divine decrees. Stray seventeenth-century proponents of universal atonement, like John Cameron and Moises Amyraut, could be identified rather uncritically as the true Calvinians, opposed by the predestinarian Calvinists.[5] Advocacy of a scho-

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[2] In the following paragraphs, I cite only a few salient examples of each claim concerning "Calvin against the Calvinists." For a lengthier bibliography and critique of these lines of argument, see Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63–102.

[3] Cf. Basil Hall, "Calvin Against the Calvinists," in *John Calvin: A Collection of Distinguished Essays*, ed. Gervase Duffield (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 19–37; Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 32, 40–42, 136–137; and Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689–1765* (London: The Olive Tree, 1967), 13; with the analysis of the *Tabula* in Richard A. Muller, "The Use and Abuse of a Document: Beza's *Tabula praedestinationis*, the Bolsec Controversy, and the Origins of Reformed Orthodoxy," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl Trueman and Scott Clark (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 33–61.

[4] Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 32, 131–139.

[5] Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 54–55, 161–167, 172–172, 186–191; Alan Clifford, *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism, a Clarification* (Norwich: Charenton Reformed Publish-

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lastic method in academies and universities was argued to be the cause of declension from the more flexible and purportedly inclusive theology of the Reformers into a rigid, unyielding orthodoxy.[6]

In its fully developed form, the "Calvin against the Calvinists" approach linked humanism, some form of fideism, and Christocentrism in Calvin and in a few later true Calvinians, and in the case of Armstrong's and Moltmann's theories, connected these characteristics with Ramism, *a posteriori* argumentation, and covenant theology.[7] It then opposed this artificially constructed pastiche of balanced, purportedly true, Calvinian theology to the purportedly unbalanced, Aristotelian, scholastic, predestinarian, metaphysical, *a prioristic*, and rationalistic theology of later Calvinism. Not only did the approach view the thought-world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in terms of neat dogmatic packages, but the packaging typically reflected twentieth-century dogmatic interests and not the patterns of formulation found among early modern Reformed theologians.

Several variant lines of argument, related to this basic "Calvin against the Calvinists" approach, took up the issue of covenant theology. Each of these approaches the rise of covenant theology and argue, on the basis of Calvin's minimal contribution to the development of a doctrine of covenant, that later federalism was a departure from Calvin. According to one pattern of argument, inasmuch as Calvin had identified the covenant of grace as unifying the two testaments and had offered no discussion of a pre-lapsarian covenant, the problematic innovation separating Calvin from later Calvinists was the covenant of works. In this view the Christocentric grace theology of Calvin stood opposed to the legalisms of later Calvinism.[8] According to another pattern of argument, Calvin's own doctrine of predestination prevented him from understanding the covenant of grace as bilateral and therefore marked out a fundamental difference between the Calvinian side

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ing, 1996). It must, incidentally be questioned as to whether such terms as "limited" and "universal atonement" can ever do justice to an early modern discussion and debate that did not use this language but instead had recourse to questions of the sufficiency and efficiency of Christ's satisfaction.

[6] Thus, Brian G. Armstrong, "*Semper Reformanda*: The Case of the French Reformed Church, 1559–1620," in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. W. Fred Graham (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers*, 1994)*, 119–140.

[7] Note, in particular, Jürgen Moltmann, "Zur Bedeutung des Petrus Ramus für Philosophie und Theologie im Calvinismus," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 68 (1957), 295–318.

[8] James B. Torrance, "Calvin and Puritanism in England and Scotland – Some Basic Concepts in the Development of 'Federal Theology,'" in *Calvinus Reformator* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1982), 264–277; idem, "The Concept of Federal Theology – Was Calvin a Federal Theologian?" in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, edited by Wilhelm H. Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 15–40; and Holmes Rolston III, *John Calvin versus the Westminster Confession* (Richmond: John Knox, 1972). On the other side of the argument, see Peter Alan Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001).

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of the Reformed tradition and "the other Reformed tradition" grounded in the work of Bullinger, specifically in his bilateral understanding of covenant and, indeed, in what amounted to his virtually Arminian doctrine of predestination.[9] A third pattern of argument, already noted as found in the work of Moltmann and Armstrong, enlisted Ramism on the side of anti-Aristotelian humanism and posed Aristotelian, scholastic, *a prioristic*, deductivistic Bezan predestinarians against anti-Aristotelian, humanistic, Ramistic covenantal thinkers invested in salvation-historical *a posteriorism*.[10]

What united all of these approaches was a highly dogmatic reading of Calvin's theology in relation to a largely uninvestigated but nonetheless dogmatically-characterized and presumedly monolithic or monochromatic later "Calvinist" or Reformed tradition. Calvin was Christocentric – later Calvinists were predestinarian; or, in a recent equally problematic variant, Calvin was a theologian of union with Christ – later Calvinists failed to focus on union with Christ.[11] Calvin was a theologian of grace – later Calvinists were immersed in legalism.[12] Calvin, for all his purported Christocentrism, was still a predestinarian and therefore opposed to bilateral covenant theology – later Calvinism evidenced a deep-seated tension between predestinarianism and covenantalism, with the federal theology of Cocceius reasserting the anti-predestinarian bilateral covenantalism of Bullinger.[13] Calvin was a humanistic, anti-Aristotelian and, despite his predestinarianism, graciously covenantal – later Calvinism, with the exception of the Ramist covenantal thinkers, was scholastic, non-humanistic, rationalistic, and Aristotelian.[14] Calvin taught unlimited atonement – later predestinarian Calvinism taught limited atonement, to the bitter exclusion of proponents of

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[9] J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* (Athens, Ohio, 1980); and idem, "Heinrich Bullinger, the Covenant, and the Reformed Tradition in Retrospect," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 29, no.2 (1998), 359–376; note the contrary argument in Lyle D. Bierma, "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?" *Westminster Theological Journal*, 45 (1983), 304–321.

[10] As has been admirably shown, this third pattern of argument has little or no basis in early modern documents: see Lyle D. Bierma, *German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 24–25, 162–168; idem, "The Role of Covenant Theology in Early Reformed Orthodoxy," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 21, no.3 (1990), 457–459; cf. Willem J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669)*, trans. Raymond A. Blacketer (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 75.

[11] So Hall, "Calvin against the Calvinists," 24–28; and Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 36-42; and recently, with reference to union with Christ, Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2008), 3, 4, 25, 27.

[12] E.g., Torrance, "The Concept of Federal Theology," 15–40.

[13] Thus, Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant*, 199–215.

[14] Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, "Prädestination und Heilsgeschichte bei Moyse Amyraut," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 65 (1953/54), 281; with Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 32–33, 37–42, 55–56.

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unlimited atonement as advocates of a "heresy".[15] Calvin's theology was wonderfully "balanced" – later Calvinists destroyed the balance.[16] All of these claims represent modern macro-dogmatic explanations that fail to engage the content, context, and intentionality of the early modern sources.

There are, also, a series of contradictions among these approaches: simply put, the older approaches, loosely identified under the rubric "Calvin against the Calvinists" did not agree with one another – and their disagreements fell, typically, along dogmatic rather than historical lines of argument. One, found in the work of J. Wayne Baker, for all its kinship to the argumentation of Hall and Armstrong,[17] probably ought to be separated out as "Calvin and the Calvinists against the Bullingerians." What they all have in common, however, is the a-historical assumption that Calvin was the founder and dogmatic arbiter of the later Reformed tradition and that the tradition was a fairly monolithic departure from its Calvinian norm, the exceptions appearing either as pure Calvinians when the body of Calvinists had departed from Calvin or as Bullingerians (or something else) when the body of Calvinists was presumed to stand lock-step in accord with Calvin. The various "Calvin against the Calvinists" approaches also all have in common a highly dogmatic, value-laden vocabulary: thus, christocentrism is good, legalism bad; humanism presumably flexible and therefore good, scholasticism and Aristotelianism purportedly rigid and rationalistic and therefore bad. Diversity in the tradition, whether doctrinal or methodological, was consistently assessed as problematic insofar as it represented something other than the declared norm, whether that norm was pure Calvinian grace theology *cum* christocentrism, Bullingerian anti-predestinarian bilateral covenantalism, Calvino-Amyraldian-humanistic universal atonement, Ramistic covenantal *a posteriorism*, or some other mythological construct, depending on the particular line of argument.

Those scholars involved in setting aside the Calvin against the Calvinists model and reassessing the post-Reformation development of Reformed orthodoxy have typically avoided dogmatically-loaded usages, recognized that historical method does not decide on matters of theological rectitude, and acknowledged the variegated nature of intellectual traditions. The last point, acknowledgment of the variegated nature of the Reformed tradition, goes to the heart of the present volume, which focuses on the test case of

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[15] Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 41–42, 137; cf. R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 13–18, 31–32, 57–58; summarized in idem, "The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology" in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 197–214.

[16] Thus, Hall, "Calvin against the Calvinists," 25, 28; Toon, *Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism*, 11–13.

[17] See Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant*, 214.

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English puritan debates, but it could be easily extended to other theological cultures.

1.2 Debate Within the Reformed Tradition

The eras of the Reformation and of Reformed orthodoxy were times of intense polemic and debate, initially over issues of reform and, as the Reformation progressed and the church divided, over issues of confessional identity and confessional boundaries. There were also a large number of debates, varying in intensity, which took place over theological and philosophical issues not immediately related to confessional definition. A tentative distinction of these different types of debate – recognizing that the categories are not rigidly defined and include some overlapping aspects – can serve both to clarify the nature of Reformed orthodoxy and to characterize the direction of investigation undertaken by the present volume. The main point of the categories is to highlight not only the diversity of Reformed theology in the era of orthodoxy but also the diversity of the debates as they played out across a spectrum from major encounters requiring confessional statement and, indeed, condemnation or disapproval, to often bitter arguments of considerably lesser weight that addressed issues of preference in theological formulation without directly broaching questions of confessionality or leading to new confessional formulae.

Three kinds of kinds of debate have been most frequently referenced in the older scholarship – namely 1) the polemical debates with other confessionalities, whether Lutheran, Roman, Socinian, or Anabaptist; 2) debates concerning particular lines of doctrinal argument that transgressed acknowledged confessional boundaries – notably the controversies over Samuel Huber's universalism and Jacob Arminius' views on grace and predestination; and 3) debates internal to the Reformed confessional tradition that, in one way or another, pressed questions of the precise meaning of the confessional documents, such as the debates over eschatology or over various elements of Salmurian theology as proposed by Moises Amyraut, Paul Testard, Josue La Place, Samuel Morus, but that did not result in synodical decisions of heresy – although sometimes yielding, as in the case of the Articles of Morus and the *Formula Consensus Helvetica*, confessional documents of a more limited scope.

There are also several other types of debate characteristic of the era, debates that took place far more frequently, but that have generally been given less attention. Thus there were 4) debates over philosophical issues, often concerned with the impact of the new rationalisms on fundamental understandings in logic, physics, and metaphysics and, by extension, on theological formulation. There were also, 5) debates concerning non- or sub-

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confessional issues that were nevertheless of a fairly significant theological weight that threatened to rise to the confessional level. Here we count the supralapsarian-infralapsarian debates, debates over what for lack of a better term can be called non-Amyraldian hypothetical universalism, over the imputation mediate or immediate of Adam's sin to his posterity, over the imputation of Christ's active obedience to believers, and the debates related to elements of Cocceian theology. Finally, 6) there were a large number of theological topics subject to rather different formulations on the part of the Reformed orthodox that sometimes issued in fairly heated interchanges among theologians but that, arguably, did not rise to the level of the debates just noted in the fifth category. By way of example, there were differences in understanding of divine simplicity in relation to the predication of divine attributes and the problem of divine knowledge of future propositions.

1.3 Debates Concerning Confessional Boundaries – Crossing Over or Pressing the Boundary

Leaving aside the first category, the debates with other confessionalities, as not belonging to the scope of the present study and concentrating specifically on debates within the Reformed tradition, some comment is necessary concerning the difference between the second and third kinds of debate – namely those identifying transgressions of confessional boundaries and those remaining withing the confessional limits – given the way in which such differences were typically glossed over in the older scholarship, particularly when the debates were analyzed in terms of the "Calvin against the Calvinists" paradigm. The late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century debates over universalistic and synergistic soteriologies, notably those over Huber's and Arminius' understandings of grace and predestination arose over the thought of theologians who were Reformed in terms of their ecclesial or confessional location but whose thought contradicted basic statements of the Reformed confessions, rendering these debates rather different from the debates over Amyraut's theology, given that not only was Amyraut Reformed in ecclesial and confessional location but his theology also arguably fell within the boundaries established by the Gallican Confession and the Canons of Dort. Huber's and Arminius' theologies did not fall within the boundaries established by such confessional documents as the Second Helvetic Confession, the Belgic Confession, and the Heidelberg Catechism.[18]

[18] Note the rather tendentious efforts to identify Arminius' theology as Reformed prior to the definitions of Dort in G.J. Hoenderdaal, "De Kekordelijke Kant van de Dordtse Synode," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 25, no.5 (1969), 349–363; and Carl Bangs, "Arminius as a Re-

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The historiographical issue is virtually the opposite in the case of Amyraut. The rather unnuanced association of Amyraut's hypothetical universalism with Calvin's theology and with a trajectory of French humanism, taken together with identification of Amyraut's views as "heresy" in the eyes of scholastic Calvinists, abetted the false picture of the nature of Reformed orthodoxy as a predestinarian, scholastic departure from Calvin's more or less humanistic theology, indeed, as a monolithic theology capable of being contrasted quite negatively with the Reformation-era foundations of the Reformed tradition. The French Synods, while objecting to some of the formulations of Amyraut and Testard, refrained from condemning their views and it was left to the *Formula Consensus Helvetica*, a document of limited geographical reach and short-lived use, to disapprove the doctrine – yet without identifying it as a heresy.[19] Once the nature of the controversy as a debate internal to the confessions has been duly recognized, as well as the genuine differences between Amyraut's formulations and Calvin's thought and the rather scholastic patterns of distinction and argument assumed by Amyraut are noted,[20] Amyraldian hypothetical universalism can be recognized as belonging to the internal diversity of the Reformed tradition itself – and a very different picture of orthodoxy emerges.

Alan Strange's analysis of the debate over of Christ's active obedience highlights the continued intensity of reaction to the heritage of Piscator among the English Reformed. The essay examines some of the backgrounds to the Westminster debates in the French synodical decisions of Privas and Tonneins against Piscator and in James I's letter to the French Synods requesting moderation of the issue. Earlier, the Synods of Gap (1603) and La Rochelle (1607) censured Piscator's views, specifically indicating the imputation of Christ's active obedience.[21] In 1612 at Privas, the Synod required clergy to sign a confessional clarification to the effect that "toute l'Obeissance" of Christ was imputed in justification, specifically that justification is not merely a matter of forgiveness but also consists in the impu-

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formed Theologian," in *The Heritage of John Calvin*, edited by John H. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 209–222; see Richard A. Muller, "Arminius and the Reformed Tradition," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 70 (2008), 19–48.

[19] *Formula Consensus Helvetica*, *praefatio* and canon xvi, in H. A. Niemeyer, *Collectio confessionium in ecclesiis reformatis publicatarum* (Leipzig: Julius Kinkhardt, 1840), 729–730, 735; and see the similar approach to Amyraut's doctrine in Francis Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae, in qua status controversiae perspicue exponitur, praecipua orthodoxorum argumenta proponuntur, & vindicantur, & fontes solutionum aperiuntur*, 3 vol. (Geneva: Samuel de Tournes, 1679–1685), IV.xvii.4; and XIV.xiv.6.

[20] See Richard A. Muller, "A Tale of Two Wills? Calvin and Amyraut on Ezekiel 18:23," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 44, no.2 (2009), 211–225.

[21] Jean Aymon, *Tous les synodes nationaux des églises de France*, 2 vol. (Den Haag, 1710), I, 257–258, 301–302; also see Heber Carlos de Campos, "Johannes Piscator (1546–1625) and the Consequent Development of the Doctrine of the Imputation of Christ's Active Obedience" (Ph. D. dissertation: Calvin Theological Seminary, 2009), 10–18, 216–239.

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tation of Christ's "active righteousness" (*Justice Active*) – without, however, any reference at this point to Piscator.[22] In the appended documents, however, there is a substantial, unsigned, refutation of Piscator's doctrine.[23] Two years later, however, at Tonneins, the more explicit language of Privas concerning Christ's active obedience was replaced by the phrases "Obedience parfaite" and "toute cette Obedience."[24] These synodical censures and confessional elaborations are as close as the Reformed ever came to a full confessional declaration specifically against Piscator.

As Strange also makes clear, while noting the rather pointed worry on the part of several delegates that the doctrine could strengthen the antinomian cause, a significant majority of divines at Westminster assumed the imputation of Christ's active as well as passive obedience to believers in and for their justification. Still, the Westminster Assembly did not follow the route adumbrated in the initial debates over revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles: the phrase "whole obedience" was not used and the language adopted in WCF 8.5, "perfect obedience and sacrifice" WCF 11.1, "imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ", could be subscribed by all, including those who did not accept the imputation of Christ's active obedience to believers. Whereas all of the motivations and considerations behind the final language of the Confession refuse modern reconstruction, the intention of the language is clear – the debate over the imputation of Christ's active obedience for the justification of believers was not raised to confessional status by the Westminster Assembly. That development was left to two later confessions of limited provenance, namely the Savoy Declaration (1658) of the Congregationalists, written by Owen and Goodwin, and the Helvetic Consensus Formula (1675).[25] In the Helvetic Consensus Formula, Piscator's doctrine hangs in the background of the Salmurian issues addressed.

The Westminster Assembly's early debate (1643) over ecclesiology – specifically over the problem of church government and the power of the keys analyzed by Hunter Powell, when examined from the perspective of its immediate result, namely the formulae contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, fits into the category of debates of significant theological weight that threatened to rise to the confessional level. In the longer view however, given the eventual severance between Presbyterians and Congregationalists or Independents, followed by the editing of confessional formu-

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[22] Jean Aymon, *Tous les synodes nationaux des églises de France*, 2 vol. (Den Haag, 1710), I, 400.

[23] Aymon, *Tous les synodes nationaux*, I, 457–461. N.B. the document is not given in Quick's *Synodicon*.

[24] Aymon, *Tous les synodes nationaux*, II, 13.

[25] *A Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England […] meeting at the Savoy, October 12. 1658* (London: John Field, 1659), xi.1 (p. 20); *Formula Consensus Helverica*, xv, in Niemeyer, *Collectio*, 734–735.

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lae to account for the differences in church polity, it bore the seeds of a deeper concern that would press the limits of the confessional formulae and result in confessional variants and schism. Powell surveys the minutes of the Westminster Assembly and collateral documents in detail, demonstrating that the debates over the nature and extent of the power of the keys and over the interpretation of Matthew 16:19 – viz., whether it was a generalized power of the universal church, a power reserved to the Apostles, a power given to all believers, or a power delegated or communicated by believers to the pastors of the church – stood in significant relation to immediate questions of church polity that plagued the English church throughout the seventeenth century. We can note, here, among other points of difference and debate, the rise of separatist groups in the early seventeenth century, the problems that the English delegation to Dort had with the polity of the Dutch Reformed church, the trans-Atlantic debate between Thomas Hooker and Samuel Rutherford over the nature of a church covenant, and the efforts of a writer like John Owen after the Restoration to refute the charge that Independents were schismatic.[26] By ending the debate with the briefest of formulae and not deciding on the broader implications of the power of the keys to the nature and forms of church government, the Assembly achieved a certain level of unity, leaving the issue unsettled and a source of later conflict.

That picture is further nuanced by Crawford Gribben's essay. The issue of millennial debate among the Reformed is both highly complicated and rather uniquely related to the confessional issue. The new eschatologies of a future millennium ran counter to the eschatologies of the sixteenth-century Reformed which, from Bullinger's commentary on the Apocalypse to Franciscus Junius' annotations, as ensconced in the margins of later editions the Geneva Bible, understood the millennium as past. Although, moreover, the major Reformed confessions had tended to tread lightly concerning the last things, two of them, the Forty-two Articles of Edward VI and the Second Helvetic Confession, had strongly argued against "the fable of the millennium" and notions of a "golden age" on earth prior to the final judgment.[27] What is rather remarkable, then, is the vast revision of Reformed eschatology that took place in the seventeenth century both in England and on the continent without yielding a major confessional confrontation – in fact, both witnessing an increased diversity in the tradition, a significant break with the views of the Reformers on the part of many orthodox Reformed writers

[26] Note Sung Ho Lee, "All Subjects of the Kingdom of Christ: John Owens' conceptions of Christian Unity and Schism" (Ph.D. dissertation: Calvin Theological Seminary, 2007); and Sang Hyuk Ahn, "Covenant and Conflict: the Controversy over the Church Covenant between Samuel Rutherford and Thomas Hooker' (Ph.D. dissertation: Calvin Theological Seminary 2011).

[27] *Articuli XLII. Eduardi VI*, art. 40, in Niemeyer, *Collectio*, 600; Second Helvetic Confession 11.14; cf. the Augsburg Confession, art. 17.

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evidenced by their acceptance of a doctrine of a future millennium. The spectrum of opinion among the continental Reformed, similar to what Gribben has identified among the English, is evidenced by the millennialism of Wilhelmus à Brakel on the one hand and the anti-millennial views of Francis Turretin on the other.[28] Turretin, significantly, distinguished between the "crass" chiliasm of various heretics and the highly objectionable but not heretical "subtle" chiliasm of Piscator, Alsted, Mede, and Launaeus – an approach parallel to his objection to Amyraldianism.[29]

1.4 Debates Over Philosophical Issues

This category of debate does not appear as a separate topic in the present volume, but it nonetheless deserves some notice given both the caricatures of Reformed scholasticism and its philosophical backgrounds found in the older scholarship and the rather diverse and variegated picture of Reformed approaches to philosophy that emerges when the documents are actually studied. Often dismissed as holding rigidly to a moribund and discredited Aristotelianism, the Reformed orthodox thinkers of the seventeenth century expressed a series of significant concerns over impact of the new rationalisms on fundamental understandings in logic, physics, and metaphysics and, by extension, on theological formulation, while at the same time developing and modifying their own approaches to the formulation and use of philosophy.

The Reformed encountered, debated, and adapted various of the patterns of metaphysical and physical argumentation that arose in the broader debates of the early modern era. Thus, for example, toward the beginning of the seventeenth century, perhaps generated by Suarez' influential work on metaphysics, with its stress on the univocity of being, Reformed theologians and philosophers debated the question of whether or not God could be discussed in metaphysics – with some arguing that God, considered as infinite being, could be a subject of metaphysics and others restricting the topics of metaphysics to being in general, excluding God from discussion.[30] As the seventeenth century progressed, various Reformed writers combated

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[28] Cf. Wilhelmus à Brakel, *LOGIKH LATREIA, dat is Redelijke Godsdienst in welken de goddelijke Waarheden van het Genade-Verbond worden verklaard [...] alsmede de Bedeeling des Verbonds in het O. en N.T. en de Ontmoeting der Kerk in het N. T. vertoond in eene Verklaring van de Openbaringen aan Johannes*, 3 parts (Den Haag: Cornelis van Duyck, 1701), III.xx.1–27; with Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XX.iii.1–22.

[29] Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, XX.iii1–4.

[30] See the discussion in Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 4 vol. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), III, 167–170.

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the problem of Pyrrhonic skepticism in their Roman Catholic opponents and at least one major Reformed thinker, Pierre Bayle (otherwise largely Cartesian), himself adopted a form of skepticism, the implications of which continue to be debated in the scholarly literature.[31]

There have been several studies of the debates that took place in the Netherlands over the reception of Cartesian thought among the Reformed,[32] studies of some of aspects of more traditional metaphysics among the Reformed,[33] and there is a highly significant recent study of the relationship of Reformed orthodoxy and philosophy from the early seventeenth through the middle of the eighteenth century, noting the shifting patterns of the more traditional, modified Aristotelianism of the era and the gradual appropriation of Cartesian arguments on the part of other Reformed thinkers.[34]

In yet another example of philosophical debate, Reformed concerns over the doctrine of providence and divine foreknowledge of future contingents associated with the rejection of Molinism, brought Reformed orthodox writers into dialogue with Dominican opponents of Molinism and led to the adoption or adaptation on the part of many of the Reformed of the concept of divine concurrence understood as "physical premotion" (*praemotio physica*). William Twisse advocated the concept, Francis Turretin adapted it selectively, and Richard Baxter polemicized against it as a form of determinism.

1.5 Debates Concerning Issues of Significant Import that Threatened to Rise to a Confessional Level

These are debates that fall within the bounds of the major Reformed confessions and that, in some cases were debated in the process of framing confessions – notably the lapsarian and hypothetical universalist questions at Dort and the hypothetical universalist issue at the Westminster Assembly –

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[31] See the essays in Paul Dibon, ed., *Pierre Bayle, le philosophe de Rotterdam* (Amsterdam: Elsevir, 1959); and Wiep van Bunge and Hans Bot, ed., *Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), le philosophe de Rotterdam; philosophy, religion, and reception* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2008).

[32] E.g., Theo Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesianism (1637–1650)* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992); idem, "Descartes and the Problem of Atheism: the Utrecht Crisis," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 71, no.2 (1991), 211–223; J.A. (Han) van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality: Voetius and Descartes on God, Nature, and Change* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).

[33] J. A. (Han) van Ruler, "Franco Petri Burgersdijk and the Case of Calvinism Within the Neo-Scholastic Tradition," in Egbert P. Bos and H. A. Krop, ed., *Franco Burgersdijk (1590–1635): Neo-Aristotelianism in Leiden* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 37–55; idem, "Burgersdijk and Heereboord on the Question of Divine Concurrence," in ibid., 56–65.

[34] Aza Goudriaan, *Reformed Orthodoxy and Philosophy, 1625–1750: Gisbertus Voetius, Petrus van Mastricht, and Anthonius Driessen* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006).

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but which did not rise to the level of causing further confessional formulation. Typically, these debates reflect issues in seventeenth-century Reformed thought that were not debated or defined by the Reformers. They also manifest a kind of diversity and variety of formulation not suitably acknowledged in the older scholarship on Reformed orthodoxy. Included here is one debate (concerning Adam's reward) that did result in the disapprobation of the *Formula Consensus Helvetica*, but that was not confessionally defined or delimited in England, where the *Formula* had no authority.

John Fesko's analysis of lapsarian debates at the Synod of Dort works through the arguments of Franciscus Gomarus on the supralapsarian side with the various definitions and supportive arguments presented by infralapsarians at the Synod, including the British delegation and, in so doing, underlines the theme of the volume, namely the diversity of the Reformed tradition. With the infralapsarians in a clear majority, the Synod not surprisingly formulated its final set of canons to include an infralapsarian definition. Fesko turns to the question of the character of the orthodoxy framed by the synod: does the infralapsarian formula render a supralapsarian definition heterodox? Significantly, this was not the conclusion drawn by the Synod. In the case of charges brought to the Synod against the supralapsarian views of Johannes Maccovius, the synodical verdict indicated the orthodoxy of his views, albeit accompanied by admonitions against excessive speculation. In Fesko's view, the underlying issue was the problem of divine authorship of sin – denied alike by infra- and supralapsarian – and the interest of the Synod in arriving at a formula that would make clear the Reformed position. The Canons of Dort, therefore, reflect both an attempt to arrive at a majority formulation and a willingness to allow for breadth and diversity of theological opinion among the Reformed.

Jonathan Moore's essay carries forward the issue of hypothetical universalism, firmly establishing by way of an examination primarily of John Owen's and John Davenant's thought that there was a significant development of non-Amyraldian hypothetical universalism in English Reformed orthodoxy that continued through the era of the Westminster Confession. There is, moreover, good reason to place this branch of the debate over hypothetical universalism in this rather than in our third category, given that it did not rise to the confessional level of the Amyraldian debates – receiving neither synodical reprimand nor explicit confessional disapproval. Moore's careful examination of the text of the Westminster Confession confirms his analysis over against those who would either read the confession as containing an unequivocal exclusion of hypothetical universalism or who would attempt to view all hypothetical universalists as Amyraldian, including those present at Westminster.

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A question can be raised here concerning Moore's description of the non-Amyraldian trajectory of hypothetical universalism as a "softening" of a Reformed tradition that was "on the whole" particularistic and resistant to such softening. Given that there was a significant hypothetical universalist trajectory in the Reformed tradition from its beginnings, it is arguably less than useful to describe its continuance as a softening of the tradition. More importantly, the presence of various forms of hypothetical universalism as well as various approaches to a more particularistic definition renders it rather problematic to describe the tradition as "on the whole" particularistic and thereby to identify hypothetical universalism as a dissident, subordinate stream of the tradition, rather than as one significant stream (or, perhaps two!) among others, having equal claim to confessional orthodoxy.

Mark Herzer's study of "Adam's Reward: Heaven or Earth?" also takes up an issue related to covenant theology, specifically to the problem of the promises given under the covenant of works and the meaning of the "life" promised to Adam in return for obedience – perpetual, yes, but would it be heavenly or earthly? The fairly radical disagreement on the issue between such eminent thinkers as Thomas Goodwin, John Cameron, Moise Amyraut, John Ball, and Johannes Marckius on the side of an earthly reward, and Francis Turretin, J.H. Heidegger, the *Formula Consensus Helvetica*, Thomas Boston and Thomas Ridgley on the side of a heavenly reward. Against the kind of arguments presented by Holmes Rolston and Donald Bruggink, Herzer shows that this aspect of a Reformed debate and formulation of issues concerning the covenant of works did not lead to "legalism" as had been alleged – both on the ground that the Reformed assumed grace in Eden and on the ground that the doctrine did not offer works as salvific in any way after the fall. What is significant here is, as Herzer concludes, that the debate occurred within the Reformed understanding of the covenant of works and did not yield intense polemics in Britain. It did, however, in the view of continental disputants in the Amyraldian controversy, press on the confessional boundaries, as made clear in the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* – without, given the limited acceptance of the *Formula*, succeeding in ruling out either the doctrine of an earthly reward for Adam or the trichotomous federal definitions with which it was associated.

1.6 Debates over Theological Topics that did not Press on Confessional Boundaries

This category of debate is of particular importance to the understanding of the character of Reformed orthodoxy and, even more than the previous category, was either ignored or misunderstood by the "Calvin against the

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Calvinists" approach to the materials. These debates are particularly illustrative of the diversity of orthodoxy.

There were a considerable number of variations of covenantal language, illustrated here by Mark Jones' essay, whether over the nomenclature itself or over the number and interrelationship of the covenants, which typically did not generate heated debate.[35] Jones notes the variety of Reformed positions on the number of covenants, most notably the distinction between the so-called dichotomist or majority position that argued two basic covenants, a prelapsarian covenant of works and a postlapsarian covenant of grace and the trichotomist view, often associated with the thought of John Cameron, that argued a covenant of works, a Mosaic covenant or dispensation of covenant "subservient" to the gospel, and the covenant of grace. Despite the differences among these positions, the Reformed were in agreement that, however related the law might be to the original covenant of works, the Mosaic covenant neither set aside the promise of salvation by grace given after the fall nor offered an alternative salvation by works. As Jones points out, the variations in formulation represent different ways of handling this assumption while at the same time arguing the distinctiveness of the Mosaic covenant. In the case of John Owen, there are arguably trichotomist accents in a basically dichotomist covenant structure. One of the several advances offered by this approach to the very diverse Reformed language of covenant is the setting aside of Armstrong's all-too-neat bifurcation of covenant language into the trichotomous views of the Salmurians (Cameron and Amyraut) and the dichotomous approach of "orthodoxy": the diversity, as Jones shows, including the formulations of Cameron and Amyraut, lay within orthodoxy, once again evidencing the diversity of Reformed orthodox theology and continuing the direction of the recent reassessments of seventeenth-century orthodoxy.

Carl Trueman's study of the thought of John Owen both analyzes Owen's own change of position and sets Owen's doctrinal argumentation into the context of a centuries-long doctrinal conversation and debate over the necessity of the atonement, noting the position of Aquinas, the shift in argumentation brought about by Scotus' voluntarism, and the apparent reflection of the Scotist view in Calvin's own thought. Owen's earlier approach followed out this more or less Scotistic approach and found confirming echoes in the thought of William Twisse and Samuel Rutherford. In his later approach, Owen saw the primary threat to orthodoxy as arising not from the Arminians but from the Socinians and, accordingly refocused his argument from a more intellectualist perspective and rooted the necessity of

[35] Also see the earlier studies by Rehnmann, "Is the Narrative of Redemption History Trichotomous or Dichotomous," 296–308; and Richard A. Muller, "Divine Covenants, Absolute and Conditional: John Cameron and the Early Orthodox Development of Reformed Covenant Theology," *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, 17 (2006), 11–56.

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the atonement in God's vindicatory justice. This shift in Owen's formulation and the fact that it involved significant debate with and departure from the views of such significant Reformed thinkers as Calvin, Musculus, Twisse, and Rutherford and actually, as Trueman notes, put Owen into the company of Pareus, Piscator, Lubbertus, Cameron, and Maccovius, very clearly illustrates the diversity of the Reformed tradition, the presence of significant debates within the confessional tradition, and also the need to reassess the rather rigid bifurcation of the Reformed tradition made by members of the "Calvin against the Calvinists" school of thought, like Armstrong and Clifford. Owen's mature views placed him, on this particular issue, consciously in the camp of Piscator, Cameron, and Amyraut.

The debate over justification from eternity, analyzed in Robert McKelvey's study, also belongs to the category of heated but lesser, subconfessional debate, connected with the lengthy controversy over antinomianism. The arguments against a doctrine of justification from eternity, particularly in the form that placed justification prior to faith, echoed many of the claims made against the Reformed doctrines of predestination and justification through faith alone – namely that it opened the door to licentiousness. As McKelvey points out, the terms used in debate serve as an index to the level of polemic reached in the controversy: "antinomianism" itself represents an exaggeration and distortion of the message of its purported proponents and, likewise, the term "eternal justification" was used without nuance to describe a series of positions, few if any of which would have asserted that the eternally justified could freely commit gross sins and never repent.

Although it did not end the antinomian debates, the Westminster Confession offered a resolution of the problem, not by pointedly condemning various understandings of eternal justification, but by stating a distinction between eternal decree of God to justify the elect, the temporal work of Christ for the sake of justification, and actual justification in the Spirit's application of Christ to believers (WCF 9.4). The distinction reflects the standard Reformed language of the eternal decree and its execution in time and perhaps intentionally echoes the standard distinction between eternal and actual providence.

Joel Beeke's study also chronicles a series of distinction, differences, and points of debate among Puritans on the relation of faith and assurance that were theologically and pastorally significant but that fell well within the confessional boundaries. The importance of the issue to Puritan writers as well as the diversity of expression is easily seen in Beeke's enumeration of members of the Westminster assembly who wrote on the subject. Noting that there was "no significant debate" on assurance in the Westminster Assembly, Beeke goes on to note a series of differences, some substantial other less so, among the Puritans – notably whether assurance belongs properly to faith or is a fruit of faith; whether faith is a condition of the

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covenant of grace or something promised by it (coupled with the issue of whether the covenant is unconditional or conditional – or, in some sense, both); whether assurance is primarily grounded on God's promises or primarily gained from introspection and evidences of grace in the life of a believer; whether syllogistic argumentation (practical or mystical) should be a basis for assurance or a "reflex" act having Christ as its foundation; whether the inward witness of the Spirit coincides with inward evidences of grace. The significance of this wide variety of expression is that it fell entirely within confessional boundaries. Beeke's essay is also helpful in manifesting the nuances of the various positions on faith and assurance – nuances ignored or misunderstood in the highly flawed but still often cited work of R. T. Kendall.[36]

The essay by Michael Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson on the debates over hymnody manifests the diversity of the Reformed tradition in several ways, not the least of which is the relationship of the Particular Baptists to the broader Reformed confessional community. Continuity between Baptist theologians and the Reformed confessional tradition is clear in the use of the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration of the Congregationalists as the basis for large portions of their Second London Confession of 1677 and 1688. The point can also easily be illustrated from the thought of major English Particular Baptist theologians, whose thought apart from the question of baptism, remained in continuity with Reformed orthodoxy.[37] The internal Baptist debates over open or closed communion and over the singing of hymns in worship also had clear parallels among the Reformed.

Focusing first on the issue of open communion and open membership, Haykin and Robinson focus on the debates between John Bunyan and several fellow Baptists – Thomas Paul, Henry Danvers, and William Kiffin. Whereas Bunyan clearly viewed the baptism of adult believers on profession of faith as the proper form of baptism and was, certainly, himself baptized as an adult, he nonetheless did not view baptism as a necessary "initiating and entering ordinance," resisted the use of believer's baptism as a basis for division among Christians, and accordingly argued the case for open communion. His opponents argued the opposite, holding that baptism was universally held to be the initiatory ordinance by Baptists and non-Baptists alike, with Kiffin adding an appeal to Scripture as regulative principle and, interestingly, citing Bunyan's Congregationalist friend, John Owen, against Bunyan's arguments. Debate was fairly pointed, but resolution was reached under the terms of the Second London Confession, which

[36] I.e., Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*; and idem, "The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology."

[37] Cf. Richard A. Muller, "John Gill and the Reformed Tradition: A Study in the Reception of Protestant Orthodoxy in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A.G. Haykin (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 51–68.

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did not broach the issue of closed communion. The other debate analyzed by Haykin and Robinson, over the question of congregational singing of "uninspired" hymns in addition to psalms, reflects a general concern among the Reformed from the beginnings of the Reformation. The argument, pressed by Isaac Marlow, opposing the singing of any previously composed psalms or hymns, adds a different dimension to the Baptist debates of the late seventeenth century. The authors conclude that the victory of Benjamin Keach's view – that both psalms and newly written hymns could be sung – marked a significant juncture in Baptist worship. We add, that it marked the juncture without occasioning a confessional statement.

1.7 Concluding Comment

The Puritan or English Reformed tradition, as surveyed in the present volume, evidences a rather diverse and variegated development, characterized not only by debates with other confessionalities or over theological developments deemed heretical and subsequently condemned by synodical decrees, but also by major and minor debates among the Reformed orthodox themselves. Most of the debates analyzed here have been passed over in the older scholarship in its quest to find these few true Calvinians to oppose to the so-called Calvinists. By contrast, none of the studies included in the present volume brands one side of a seventeenth-century debate as un-Calvinian or identifies an alteration of doctrinal perspective as a declension from Reformation-era purity. Calvin no longer appears as a norm, although he does appear, with other Reformers, as an antecedent of certain lines of argument.

What ought to be most evident is that research into the diversity of the later Reformed tradition not only undermines the older claim that the dawn of an era of orthodoxy and scholasticism produced a rigid, nearly monolithic Calvinism or a nearly universally-held model according to which all aspects of theology were deduced from a divine decree, but also documents both an ongoing concern to further the Reformation in and through clarification of its doctrines and a fairly clear sense on the part of Reformed theologians and pastors of the nature of confessions and confessional boundaries. Specifically they understood the confessions as specifically worded to exclude certain positions (like various synergistic soteriologies, including Arminianism), but also very carefully worded either to discourage certain positions without overtly condemning them or to allow a significant breadth of theological expression within and under the confessional formulae.

Specific issue can be taken, therefore, with Armstrong's rather anachronistic use of the phrase *semper reformanda* as a characterization of the process of confessional recitation, revision, and re-subscription found in the earlier French synods and to his argument that the earlier synods aimed at a

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form of theological inclusiveness, while the later synods, beset with debates over Piscator, Amyraut, and Testard and guided toward rigid formulation by scholastic methodology, rejected "continuing reformation".[38] The language of *ecclesia Reformata, semper reformanda* comes from later seventeenth-century developments in the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie*, which was profoundly connected with the scholastic orthodoxy of Dutch university theology, most notably that of Utrecht. More importantly, however, the process of confessional revision that took place in the French synods of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, like the process of revision of the Belgic Confession in the Dutch synods of the era documents the attempt of synods, particularly when faced with cases of variant theological formulation, to clarify the nature of the Reformed faith, to include what was viewed as acceptable, to exclude what was not, on a case by case basis. What is more, the history of the French Synods in the seventeenth century hardly evidences either an early inclusiveness or increasing rigidity. The revisions stand not as attempts to broaden the Reformed faith but as clarifications of positions. Nor does later synodical behavior indicate a reversal: in the cases of Amyraut and Testard, the synodical decisions tended away from the production of new and more explicit confessional statements toward admonitions and demands that controversy cease and that controversial works not be published.

The essays in the present volume document rather convincingly the diversity of the tradition and the large number of debates that took place within the tradition without yielding increasingly detailed confessional statements. The importance of this diversity to the understanding, indeed, the reassessment of Reformed orthodoxy rests on several issues: first, the presence of such a variety of debates within the tradition sets aside the rather standard claims of the older scholarship concerning "rigid orthodoxy". Second, it offers evidence of a tradition that was both varied in its sources and backgrounds and actively involved in formulating theology in new and varied contexts. Third, it offers an approach to analyzing the Reformed thought of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries categorically different from the rather barren dogmatic game of one-for-one comparisons between a thinker from the era of orthodoxy and John Calvin. Instead of the one-for-one comparison it offers a more historically-grounded examination of Reformed orthodoxy that looks to context and situation of an individual thinker's contribution to a debate for explanation rather than to a generalized "ism" like "Christocentrism" or "scholasticism or "Aristotelianism." The emphasis of the present volume on concerted examination of the diversity of the tradition, therefore, also marks out a salutary path to future research in the field.

[38] Armstrong, "*Semper Reformanda*," 119, 136–138.

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2. The Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ at the Westminster Assembly

Alan D. Strange

2.1 Introduction

Those who affirm the imputation of the active obedience of Christ (hereafter, IAOC) in the doctrine of justification by faith, and those who deny it, have in recent years vigorously debated the issue. No small part of the debate has been about the role of the Westminster Assembly of Divines and the documents produced by that body. Several sources have historically averred that the Assembly did not affirm the IAOC, and more recent sources have repeated that assertion. Others, however, have argued that, while the Divines in what they finally adopted, may never have explicitly affirmed the IAOC, nonetheless, the Westminster documents, taken as a whole, tend to affirm the IAOC.[1] It may be thought that little remains to add to this discussion. It is my contention, however, that a few lacunae remain that, when examined, will fill in the picture and permit us to see more clearly that the Westminster Assembly, when it specifically addressed the issue of the IAOC, affirmed it, and though the final language may not have reflected it as do some other formulations (such as the Savoy Declaration of 1658), the documents of the Assembly do reflect a two-covenant structure that affirms (indeed, arguably, that entails and requires) the IAOC. Moreover that the Assembly was not a ruling body of the church but was rather constituted to give advice to the Parliament materially affected how it did its work, consideration of which is relevant in a variety of controversies, including the question of whether or not the Assembly affirmed the IAOC.[2]

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[1] Jeffrey Jue argues this position well in "The Active Obedience of Christ and the Theology of the Westminster Standards: A Historical Investigation," in *Justified in Christ: God's Plan for Us in Justification*, K. Scott Oliphint, ed. (Great Britain: Mentor, 2007), 99–130. The assertion that the Westminster Standards tend to affirm the IAOC is also made in *Justification: Report of the Committee [of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church] to Study the Doctrine of Justification* (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education of the OPC, 2007), 144–45.

[2] Two works are particularly helpful in understanding the nature of the Westminster Assembly as a body erected to give doctrinal and ecclesiastical advice to the British Parliament: Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord: Politics and Religion in the Westminster Assembly and the 'Grand*

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2.2 Historiography

The allegation that the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), more specifically, or the Westminster Standards (including the Larger and Shorter Catechisms) more broadly, do not teach the IAOC, or that it at least accommodated those who objected to it, is of some ancient lineage. Mitchell and Struthers treat it in their edition of the Assembly's *Minutes*. They speculate that the alleged omission of explicit language affirming the IAOC in WCF 11 was probably to appease Thomas Gataker and others who objected to it. Mitchell and Struthers acknowledge that though most of the divines at the Assembly "favoured the views of Ussher and Featley," theologians distinctly and vigorously supportive of the IAOC (and expressive of such originally), those same divines were later willing to forego a clear affirmation of IAOC and thus to "abstain from further controversy about the matter."[3] The clear implication is that the divines were unwilling to make the IAOC a confessional matter and that, in the end, they accommodated those who did not affirm the IAOC.[4]

In his history of the Westminster Assembly, Mitchell argues along similar lines, but more fully.[5] Relying chiefly on Daniel Featley's speeches in favor of affirming the IAOC, Mitchell correctly notes that on the vote taken

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Debate' (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), esp. Part I, and S.W. Carruthers, *The Everyday Work of the Westminster Assembly*, J. Ligon Duncan, III, ed. (rpt. Greenville, SC: Reformed Academic Press, 1994), esp. chaps. 1–4. See also, for the figures of the WA, William Barker, *Puritan Profiles: 54 Puritan Personalities drawn together by the Westminster Assembly* (Great Britain: Mentor, 1996). And, finally, a recent work that sheds much light on the ecclesiastical circumstances and theological positions of the divines is Robert A. Letham's *Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2009); with respect to the justification controversy, and the affirmation of the IAOC, see pp. 250–264. Letham tends to see the debate over the IAOC at the Westminster Assembly as inconclusive, retaining an ambiguity inasmuch as the Assembly refrained from positively affirming the IAOC.

[3] Alex. F. Mitchell and John Struthers, *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874), lxv–lxvii. The reference to avoidance of further controversy occurs because Mitchell and Struthers recognize that though early in the Westminster Assembly (Sept. 1643), there was controversy over the IAOC, there latter appeared to be, at the time of the adoption of WCF 11 (in 1645/6), no further significant debate over the IAOC, considerations of which are developed below.

[4] James Ussher did not argue for the affirmation of the IAOC in the debates at Westminster because, as a devoted Episcopalian, he opposed the meeting of the Assembly (Barker, 44–47) and Daniel Featley, though a good source for the 1643 debate on IAOC, and a staunch defender of it, was also an Episcopalian, who was arrested just after the justification debates and died in 1645, before the adoption of the Westminster Confession of Faith (Barker, 47–50). It is remarkable given the strong animus against Episcopalians how much doctrinal influence Ussher and Featley had. This shows that the Divines could strongly disagree on matters ecclesiastical (as with the Erastians and Independents) but be doctrinally united and give a strong affirmation of the IAOC in the whole of the Standards even after the death of IAOC champion Featley.

[5] Alex. F Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly: Its History and Standards* (London, 1883; rpt. Edmonton: Still Water Revival Books, 1992), 149–56.

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